U.S. raps FBI chief for fakery

FBE Post 1/20/93

WASHINGTON (AP) – The Justice Department reprimanded FBI Director William S. Sessions for "taking advantage of the government" to finance extensive travel and ordered him to reimburse the Treasury, according to documents released Tuesday.

Before he left office last week, former Attorney General William P. Barr reproached Mr. Sessions for repeatedly using FBI aircraft for personal trips and justifying billing the government by arranging to attend functions of "trivial, if any, value to the government."

Mr. Barr said he was "most troubled" by Mr. Sessions' effort to avoid paying taxes on the use of a government-supplied limousine that takes him to and from work. Mr. Sessions obtained a law-enforcement exemption to paying the tax by relying on what Mr. Barr called a "transparently wrong" legal opinion that he could carry a gun in his briefcase.

An investigation of the allegations of misconduct conducted by the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility found that Mr. Sessions had never fired the unloaded weapon, which he kept in a locked briefcase in the trunk.

"Federal law enforcement officials have a special obligation to be scrupulous in meeting their federal tax obligations," Mr. Barr said. "The notion that you could convert an executive chauffeur-driven limousine into a tactical police vehicle by keeping an unloaded gun in the trunk does not even pass the 'red face test.' "

Mr. Barr's Jan. 15 letter to Mr. Sessions was issued by the Justice Department, along with a 160-page report.

"The evidence supporting the report's conclusions is overwhelming and your explanations, where provided, are wholly unpersuasive," Mr. Barr said in the letter.

There was no immediate comment from Mr. Sessions or his lawyers, who met with Justice Department investigators before the report was forwarded to Mr. Barr.

Mr. Barr also ordered Mr. Sessions to pay the government nearly $10,000 for the installation of a wooden privacy fence around his home. FBI officials had recommended a wrought-iron fence for security reasons, saying a wooden fence would only make it harder to protect the director's home.

FBI officials told the director that if he and his wife, Alice, preferred a wooden fence they should pay for it out of their own money.

Mr. Sessions was also ordered to repay the government for the cost of trips he made solely for personal reasons.

"If all that was involved was one or two lapses of judgment, I would consider harping on this to be petty," Mr. Barr said. "But what is troubling here is that there is a clear pattern of your taking advantage of the government."